



## State of Utah

JON M. HUNTSMAN, JR.  
Governor

GARY R. HERBERT  
Lieutenant Governor

## Department of Human Services

LISA-MICHELE CHURCH  
Executive Director

Division of Child and Family Services

DUANE E. BETOURNAY  
Director

January 28, 2008

Shelley Wright, Chairperson  
Eastern Region Quality Improvement Committee  
Children's Justice Center  
108 North 300 East  
Price, Utah 84501

Dear Shelley,

We were pleased to receive the committee's letter expressing concerns, asking questions and making suggestions about ways to improve employee retention. Employee retention and morale is one of the top priorities for the Child and Family Service's administration. As was so well-stated in your letter, having a well-trained, experienced and highly motivated staff is critical to providing quality services to children and families.

Within your letter you first posed several questions. They were:

*Why are there no accommodations for staff who wish to make DCFS their career, such as longevity and merit raises?*

The rules of longevity are determined by the Department of Human Resources and apply to all state employees. Merit raises can only be approved by the state legislature. Child and Family Services is working on a proposal for a type of career ladder system, similar to that of the Department of Education. This proposal will be made in the 2009 legislative session.

*Given the work DCFS does, the paperwork and licensure required, why are they not paid more as a child welfare social worker over other social work jobs?*

It is difficult to truly convey the differences when comparing our staff to other Divisions within the Department of Human Services. Child welfare social workers are indexed the same as other social workers. Risk, stress, paperwork requirements and the magnitude of the decisions our staff have to make will be included in the proposal for the "career ladder" system at next year's legislative session.

*Whose job is it to work with the legislature to provide raises for social workers who work for DCFS?*

The responsibility lies with both the administration of the Division of Child and Family Services as well as the executive director of the department of Human Services. One of the difficulties is possible inequities within the Department of Human Services if Child and Family Services social workers were to

receive a raise. Child and Family Services administration continues to work within the department toward a reasonable goal of increased compensation and equity.

Once we have the proposal for a new career ladder type of system prepared, it will be shared with quality improvement committees. The advocacy of the citizen members to support and fund this system would be greatly appreciated.

The remainder of your letter was a list of wonderful suggestions. Unfortunately, the majority of them are not within our ability to change. They are either controlled by the legislature or the Division of Facilities Management. Rest assured that they will be considered for inclusion in the career ladder proposal as mentioned above.

The suggestions we do have control of are the following:

*Having the Safe screen not pop up with the red notification as being the first thing seen when turning it on. This serves as a reminder of all you are not doing right.*

We do try to be strengths based in our approach with staff much as we hope they are strengths based with their clients. These notifications had been programmed this way so that workers could not miss the notice of a deadline. We appreciate your observations of negativity and will have the SAFE team investigate potential alternatives.

*Ensuring that workers caseload remains manageable.*

A workload study of all program areas was recently completed, which we are happy to share with your committee. We realize that employee retention goes hand in hand with ensuring manageable caseloads. One of the building blocks we are pursuing this current legislative session is the request for 18 additional full time employees including 14 caseworkers, 2 supervisors and 2 support staff. The number for the request was based on tracking of staff and caseload ratios statewide.

We appreciate the thoughtful considerations posed by your committee. We are hopeful that we can work very closely with all the quality improvement committees to advocate with your legislators for the approval of the career ladder system which has the potential to positively impact employee retention and therefore sustain good service to children and families.

Again, thank you for your energy in assessing the issues related to employee retention and the insightful suggestions. This is precisely the sort of outside perspective that was envisioned as the committees were developed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Duane Betournay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Duane Betournay  
Director, Child and Family Services